

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 /062 W
-----083052 221259Z /43

O R 221327Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4429
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
CINCUSAFE IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR
HQ 3AF RAF MILDENHALL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 04595

DEFENSE FOR SECRETARY BROWN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY/ISA
MCGIFFERT AND CSAF

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: UK NATO MPOL MILI
SUBJECT: RAF GREENHAM COMMON

REF: A) LONDON 4088; B) LONDON 4366; C STATE 65789
D) STATE 69800

1. I MET, ACCOMPANIED BY MACDONALD, ON 2L MARCH WITH
MCNAIR-WILSON (MP FOR NEWBURY), MITCHELL (MP FOR
BASINGSTOKE) AND FIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE
SPEARHEADING THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST REACTIVATION OF RAF
GREENHAM COMMON. THEY SPOKE FOR SEVENTY MINUTES
AGAINST REACTIVATION. THEY MADE THEIR CASE WITH
DIGNITY AND WITH CONTROLLED EMOTION, ARTICULATING WELL
THAT HOST OF ARGUMENTS WHICH OPPONENTS OF NOISE
POLLUTION, AIRFIELDS, INCREASED TRAFFIC, AIR POLLUTION,
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ETC., HAVE REFINED OVER THE YEARS. I DO NOT BELIEVE
IT IS NECESSARY TO REPEAT THE VERY MANY SPECIFIC DETAIL
THEY PUT TO ME WITH ONLY THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH OF ANTI-
MILITARISM AND ANTI-AMERICANISM. THE THRUST OF THEIR
ARGUMENT WHICH DOES SEEM PECULIAR TO GREENHAM HOWEVER,
IS THAT SINCE ITS DEACTIVATION A DENSE RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL AND MEDICAL SERVICES COMMUNITY HAS GROWN UP

VERY CLOSE TO THE WEST END OF THE RUNWAY. THIS DOES DIFFERENTIATE GREENHAM FROM ALL OF THE OTHER FIELDS USED FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS.

2. A NUMBER OF POINTS EMERGED WHICH I BELIEVE ARE OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE AND WHICH ARE CAUSE FOR REAL CONCERN AS TO WHETHER IT IS PRUDENT TO PRESS ON HMG TO DELIVER ON GREENHAM COMMON: (A) THE USAF AND HMG ASSURED THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY AUTHORITIES SOME YEARS AGO THAT GREENHAM COMMON WOULD NOT BE REACTIVATED (B) THIS LED THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO PERMIT NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDING NEAR TO THE AIRFIELD PERIMETER; (C) MCNAIR-WILSON CLAIMS HE GOT A CATEGORIC ASSURANCE FROM THE THEN COMMANDER OF 3RD AIR FORCE, LESS THAN TWO-YEARS AGO, THAT USG HAD NO PLANS TO REACTIVATE. WHILE ACCEPTING THAT PLANS CAN CHANGE, THE BRITISH DEPUTATION FELT STRONGLY THAT TO RENEGE ON PREVIOUS ASSURANCES, THE USG MUST HAVE AN "ABSOLUTELY COMPELLING STRATEGIC CASE" JUSTIFYING GREENHAM COMMON. THEY ASSERTED THAT SUCH A CASE COULD NOT BE MADE WHEN THERE ARE MORE SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE SITES FROM AN OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL, AND NOISE POLLUTION VIEWPOINT. THEY MENTIONED BRIZE-NORTON, FAIRFORD, SCULTHORPE AND WETHERSFIELD.

3. WHILE I HEARD THE DEPUTATION OUT WITHOUT MAKING ANY CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMENT ON THE MERITS OF THEIR ARGUMENT, I DID UNDERTAKE TO PASS TO YOU THEIR DEEP CONCERN. HAVING NOW HEARD FIRST HAND THE STORY AGAINST REACTIVATION, I AM MORE DEEPLY CONCERNED THAN HERETOFORE THAT THE REAL ORICE WE ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO PAY FOR SUCCESS OVER GREENHAM COMMON WILL DISTURB--PERHAPS EVEN DESTROY-- THE 3RD AIR FORCE'S GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL BRITISH COMMUNITY IN MANY PLACES. IT HAS TAKEN YEARS TO BUILD-UP THIS RELATIONSHIP AND GOOD AS

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IT IS, I DO NOT BELIEVE IT CAN WITHSTAND THE KIND OF
ATTACK THE OPPONENTS OF REACTIVATION ASSERT WILL COME
IF GREENHAM COMMON IS SELECTED. ALREADY THEY HAVE
16,000 SIGNATURES IN 16 DAYS FOR A PETITION AND
MCNAIR-WILSON GUESSED THEY WOULD TOP OVER 20,000 OUT OF
A LOCAL RESIDENT COMMUNITY OF ABOUT 30,000 PEOPLE.

4. IN ADDITION, EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAVE HEARD A NUMBER
OF ARGUMENTS MADE BY SENIOR MOD OFFICIALS EXPRESSING
THEIR REAL CONCERN OVER THE PROSPECTS OF GETTING A
FAVORABLE DECISION. MOREOVER, THEY HAVE HINTED
STRONGLY THAT EVEN IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING
SUCH A DECISION, THERE ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL BE
SIGNIFICANT RESTRICTIONS WHICH WOULD IMPACT ON FUTURE
OPTIONS CONCERNING OPERATIONAL USAGE AND DEPLOYMENT OF
ADDITIONAL OR OTHER TYPE OF AIRCRAFT. IT IS IN THIS
CONTEXT THAT THESE OFFICIALS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE
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INCREASED FLEXIBILITY OF DEPLOYING ELSEWHERE WOULD BE
WORTH THE ADDITIONAL COST INVOLVED. WE NOTE FROM
REFTEL C THAT BRIZE-NORTON WOULD HAVE SOME STRATEGIC
AND OPERATIONAL ADVANTAGES IF THE RAF COULD ACCOMMODATE
THE TANKER FLEET. I BELIEVE WE WOULD DO WELL TO
PRESS OUR INTEREST IN BRIZE-NORTON ON HMG UNLESS YOU
HAVE OBJECTION.

5. TAKING TOGETHER WHAT WE HAVE HEARD, BOTH FROM
SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND FROM THE BRITISH

DEPUTATION (WHICH REFLECTED A RISING PUBLIC SENTIMENT ONLY JUST UNDER CONTROL), I FEEL THERE IS MERIT IN DEFUSING THE HEAT OF OPPOSITION BY FORMALLY ASKING HMG TO CONSIDER OTHER ALTERNATIVE SITES. BY UNDERTAKING TO SET GREENHAM COMMON ASIDE--UNLESS THE EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE SITES SUPPORTS THE STRATEGIC RATIONALE URGING DEPLOYMENT TO GREENHAM COMMON--WE WOULD DO MUCH TO STRENGTHEN OUR CASE IN THE EYES OF PUBLIC OPINION.

6. WHILE WE SHOULD NOT IN FACT OR IN APPEARANCE SEEM TO BUCKLE UNDER POLITICAL PRESSURE UNLESS IT HAS MERIT, IF WE DO THINK THAT ANOTHER SITE IS AT LEAST AS GOOD OR BETTER, WE SHOULD PURSUE IT NOW WHILE THE GREENHAM OPPOSITION IS RESPONSIBLE AND FAIRLY LOW KEY.

7. I HAVE NO HESITATION IN SAYING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE RELIEVED IF WE BACKED OFF FROM GREENHAM COMMON. AT THE SAME TIME, I AM CONFIDENT MULLEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO BACK US VIS-A-VIS GREENHAM COMMON WITH HIS MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES SHOULD WE DECIDE THAT NONE OF THE ALTERNATIVE SITES IS REALLY SATISFACTORY.

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